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NEWS RELEASE

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TWO FEDERAL INMATES INDICTED FOR TAKING GUARD HOSTAGE

FRESNO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that a federal grand jury returned a single count indictment charging ROBERT W. HOWE, age 34, and CHARLES A. HIPPS, age 33, with hostage taking.

The investigation of this incident was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Prisons.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Kevin P. Rooney, who is prosecuting the case, the indictment alleges that the defendants, inmates at the Atwater Federal Penitentiary in Merced County, took a correctional officer hostage and demanded to be transferred to another institution. Fortunately, the situation was resolved without force and neither the correctional officer nor the inmates were injured. HOWE is a native of Davie, Florida and is already serving an 88 year sentence for bank robbery and brandishing a firearm. HIPPS is a native of Sparta, Illinois and is serving a sentence of approximately 11 years for methamphetamine manufacturing.

The maximum statutory penalty for hostage taking is life in prison. However, the actual sentence will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables, and any applicable statutory sentencing factors.

The charges are only allegations and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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